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**El sentido de la pedagogía crítica en la era de la globalización.
Entrevista a Peter McLaren**

**The Role of Critical Pedagogy in the Globalization Era.
Interview with Peter McLaren**

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Resumen

Frente a las teorías posmodernas que argumentan el fin de la clase trabajadora, Peter McLaren analiza la globalización como una forma de imperialismo, con una perspectiva crítica que se fundamenta en la teoría marxista y en el concepto de clase social. Con el motivo de los acontecimientos del 11 de septiembre de 2001, describe la política exterior de los Estados Unidos y sus efectos a nivel internacional, y establece una comparación entre Bin Laden y el Che Guevara, en la que se acentúan las diferencias entre estas dos figuras. Las conclusiones de este análisis para la educación esclarecen el rol de la pedagogía crítica, cuyo papel es de contribuir a la creación de una sociedad equitativa sostenida por valores de cooperación y solidaridad.

Palabras clave: Globalización, clase social, pedagogía crítica.

Abstract

In the face of postmodern theories claiming the end of the working class, Peter McLaren discusses globalization as a form of imperialism; he does so from a

critical perspective founded on the Marxist theory and on the concept of social class. Regarding the events of September 11th, 2001, he describes U.S. foreign policy and its effects at the international level. He contrasts Bin Laden and Che Guevara, highlighting the differences between the two figures. The conclusion of his analysis define the role of critical pedagogy in education, whose purpose is that of contributing to the creation of an egalitarian society based on the values of cooperation and solidarity.

Key words: Globalization, social class, critical pedagogy.

Peter McLaren inició su carrera como educador en Toronto, Canada, su ciudad natal, enseñando en una escuela del interior, en una de las zonas más densamente pobladas del país. McLaren terminó su doctorado en *The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education*, de la Universidad de Toronto en 1983. En 1985, McLaren participó con Henry Giroux en la creación del Centro de Estudios de Educación y Cultura, en la Universidad de Miami, en Ohio, en donde colaboró como Director Asociado y Director. En ese periodo fue distinguido con el título de “*Renowned Scholar in Residence*”, *School of Education and Allied Professions*. El profesor McLaren es autor y editor de más de 35 libros, varios de ellos premiados, y cientos de artículos en una extensa gama temática: etnografía crítica, sociología de la educación, cultura popular, alfabetización crítica, teoría marxista y pedagogía crítica. Su trabajo ha sido traducido en 15 idiomas. En 1993 inició su trabajo en la Universidad de California, en donde participa como profesor en la Escuela de Graduados en Educación. Sus libros más recientes son: *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* (2000); *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture* (1995); *Revolutionary Multiculturalism* (1997); y *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution* (2000).

L.C.A.M.: Postmodern theorists have argued that the working class has largely disappeared in the United States and that what faces the US today is a new information economy in a new era of globalization. What would you say to this?

McLaren: If the postmodernists want to brag about the disappearance of the U.S. working-class and celebrate the new culture of lifestyle consumption, then they need to acknowledge that the so-called disappearing working-class in the U.S. is reappearing again in the assembly lines of China, Brazil, Indonesia, and elsewhere, where there exist fewer impediments to U.S. profit-making. Of

course, this observation actually confuses the issue somewhat, because there is a working-class in the United States. It has not disappeared but has been reconfigured somewhat. Back to your question about globalization, I think that globalization can be better understood as a form of imperialism, an intensification of older forms of imperialism.

Globalization represents an ideological facade that camouflages the manifold operations of imperialism. In fact, the concept of globalization has effectively replaced the term imperialism in the lexicon of the privileged class for the purpose of exaggerating the global character of capitalism as an all-encompassing and indefatigable power that apparently no nation-state has the means to resist or oppose. It further confuses the issue that capitalism no longer needs the protection of the nation-state.

L.C.A.M.: Does this position hide the fact that state power still works mainly on behalf of the transnational corporations?

Mc. Laren: Yes, it does. Moreover, the globalization thesis maintains that whereas state power can be used in the interests of the large multinational corporations, it cannot be employed in the interest of the working-class. I am using the term imperialism here after Lenin, to refer to the merging of industrial capital via cartels, syndicates, and trusts, with banking capital, the result of which is *finance capital*.

L.C.A.M.: So, globalization is not about the standardization of commodities? The same designer clothes appearing in shopping plazas throughout the world?

Mc. Laren: It is really really much more than this. It is tied to the politics of neo-liberalism, in which violence asserts itself through a recomposition of the capital-labor relationship. Such a recomposition entails the subordination of social reproduction to the reproduction of capital, the deregulation of the labor market, the globalization of liquid capital, the outsourcing of production to cheap labor markets, and the transfer of local capital intended for social services into finance capital for global investment. Teresa Ebert has provided a lucid and incisive 'materialist' critique of two approaches to globalization: what she calls the globalization-as-transnationalism argument and the political theory of globalization. The former representation of globalization refers to the putative emergence of a new world community based on a shared cosmopolitanism and culture of consumption. This perspective shares a culture and a state orientation. The cultural orientation emphasizes global symbolic exchanges relating to values, preferences, and tastes rather than material inequality and class relations. It is essentially a form of cultural logic. The focus on the state explores the relationship between the local and the global and whether globalization means

the reorganization or disappearance of the nation-state. The political theories of globalization generally argue about the sovereign status of the nation-state. They argue that local legal codes, local currencies, and local habits and customs that enables the rise of capitalism now serve as constraints on capital, so that now the new transnational institutions more suitable to the new phase of capitalism are developing. Ebert rightly stresses the importance of production and highlights what the politics of globalization is really about: the continuous privatization of the means of production; the creation of expanding markets for capital and the creation of a limitless market of highly skilled and very cheap labor in order for capitalists to maintain their competitive rate of profit. In short, this process is all about the internationalization of capitalist relations of exploitation.

L.C.A.M.: When you come to think about it, this new imperialism is not really so new after all.

McLaren: That's correct. As Ramin Farahmandpur and I have argued, it's really a combination of old-style military and financial practices as well as recent attempts by developed nations to impose the law of the market on the whole of humanity itself. The global aristocracy's new world order has set out to expand the free market in the interest of quick profits, to increase global production, to raise the level of exports in the manufacturing sector, and to intensify competition among transnational corporations. It has also benefited from part-time and contingent work, reduced the pool of full-time employment, and accelerated immigration from Third World and developing countries to industrial nations. I very much agree with the thesis of James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer here. Capital and goods moving across national boundaries were always centered in specific nation states. The results of the expansion of capital and goods across national boundaries has always benefited classes in an unequal fashion, even when you consider the contemporary presence of transnational capitalists from former colonial countries who are engaged in capital export. Here Petras and Veltmeyer give the examples of China, Hong Kong, Mexico, Chile, South Korea, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia. Even though the world is seeing more new billionaires from ex-colonial countries, and the expansion of new centers of accumulation, the qualitative class relations remain the same.

L.C.A.M.: Could you summarize some more of their recent observations?

Mc McLaren: I will try but I believe they are well worth examining in more detail than I can do here. The idea of globalization as a sharing of economies whose national interdependence will lead to shared benefits is obfuscating. It is more accurate to use the concept of imperialism, which emphasizes the domination and exploitation by imperial states and multinational corporations and banks of less-developed states and laboring classes. The notion of imperialism fits the reality of the situation much better, as Petras and Veltmeyer make clear, that it is

the dominated, primarily Third World countries that are the low-wage areas, interest and profit-exporters (not importers), and that they are prisoners of international financial institutions and dependent on limited overseas markets and export products. There is a strong relationship between the growth of international flows of capital and an increase in inequalities between states, and between **CEO's** (Chief Executive Officers of Corporations) and workers.

L.C.A.M.: Let us return to the concept of social class. Would you please elaborate on this. How do you understand the concept of social class and education in what some people are calling a postmodern, globalized world?

McLaren: Let me try to answer that as best as I can. Ken Moody points out that the number of industrial workers in the global South has increased from 285 million in 1980 to 407 million in 1994. The ranks of the industrial working class are rising. And in places in the more industrialized countries like Brasil, South Korea, and South Africa, union membership is on the rise. However, the composition of the working-class is changing. There is more temporary employment, informal employment, as well as increased unemployment, together these are occurring at a faster rate than the creation of permanent, formal jobs. So we largely have in the current working-class a new reserve army of labor, as Marx put it. Given the increasing scale of capitalist development and the separation of direct producers from their means of production, there has never been a more important time to rethink the notion of social class. The ruling class has deflected attention from the reality of class-based inequality within the globalization of capitalism by taking advantage of intra-and cross-class conflicts.

L.C.A.M.: Do we need to remember that not all classes in developed nation-states benefit from the globalization of capitalism?

McLaren: Correct. It is mostly the large dominant enterprises that prosper. I believe that especially at this particular juncture in history, it is important to approach the question of social class from a Marxist perspective. I would emphasize this even further, considering the fact that in the universities in Britain, the US, and elsewhere, a neo-Weberian view of social class, along with its technicist tendency to link the idea of social class to occupation, still predominates. Here I follow the lead of some of my British colleagues -- Paula Allman, Dave Hill, Mike Cole, and Glenn Rikowski, to be specific -- who have written a great deal on this subject. They have roundly criticized conventional neo-Weberian social 'class' categories based not only on income, but also on notions of status and associated consumption patterns and life-styles because such notions ignore, indeed hide, the existence of the capitalist class -- that class which dominates society economically and politically. This class owns the means of production, and the means of distribution and exchange, i.e. they are

the owners of factories, transport companies, industry, finance, the media. In other words, these consumption-based patterns mask the existence of capitalists, including the super rich and the super powerful: the ruling class. In addition, consumption-based classifications of social class mask the fundamentally *antagonistic* relationship between the two main classes in society, the working class and the capitalist class.

L.C.A.M.: How do you see it through a Marxist analysis?

McLaren: Ok, now let me further explain what I mean by the concept of class. The working class includes not only manual workers but also millions of white-collar workers, such as bank clerks and supermarket check-out operators, whose conditions of work are similar to those of manual workers. Hill, Cole, Allman, Rikowski, and other Marxists have long argued that neo-Weberian and technicist conceptions of 'class' function to segment the working class, covering up the very presence of the working class. By segmenting different groups of workers, for example white collar and blue collar workers, and workers in work and the so-called 'underclass' workers, they divide the working class against itself -- this is the familiar "divide and rule" tactic. By creating subdivisions of the working class -- often termed class fractions or segments -- it is easier to disguise the common interests of these different groups comprising the working class. This fundamentally inhibits the development of a common (class) consciousness against the exploiting capitalist class. Hill and Cole's powerful Marxist critique of the mainstream neo-Weberian perspective on social 'class' reveals its inherently *ideological* nature. Their latest book, *Schooling and Equality: Fact, Concept and Policy*, expands on this point, as well as providing significant insights into the education impact on gender, 'race' and other forms of inequality that haunt contemporary life.

L.C.A.M.: The United States has been successful in its propaganda campaign in favor of free trade. What is your opinion?

McLaren: The United States ruling class has made a powerful argument here that wealth depletion among developing nations is rescued by capital from the globalized activities of advanced capitalist countries. This, of course, is a bold-faced lie, but this lie has been hidden from the public by the mass media. In actual fact, transnational corporations drain the local capital from poor countries rather than bring in new capital. Because their savings are often low, banks in developing countries would rather lend to their own subsidiary corporations (who send their profits back to advanced nations) than to struggling local businesses in Third-World countries. Faced with low prices for exports, high tariffs on processed goods, and a lack of capital and rising prices, local businesses are locked into entrenched impoverishment because of what have

been euphemistically described as ‘structural adjustment measures’ to balance the budget.

L.C.A.M.: How are such measures financed?

McLaren: Mainly through cuts in spending for human development. The World Trade Organization does not permit poor countries to prioritize fighting poverty over increasing exports or to choose a development path that will advance the interests of the countries’ own populations. Big business is in control of the government here in the United States and the US basically is dedicated to serve profits rather than its citizens. And many corporations have more income-generating power than entire countries. For instance, General Motors is bigger than Denmark in wealth; Daimler Chrysler is bigger than Poland; Royal Dutch/Shell is bigger than Venezuela, we need to stand back and take a deep breath, asking ourselves to whom—as citizens in the world’s poster-child democracy—we really serve and for whose benefit. In 1990, the sales of each of the top five corporations (General Motors, Wal-Mart, Exxon, Mobil, and Daimler Chrysler) were bigger than the **GDPs** (Gross Domestic Product) of 182 countries.

Let’s take a closer look at the situation here in the United States. We are currently witnessing a right-wing backlash against the civil rights of working-class minority groups, immigrants, women, and children. What we are essentially seeing is increasing rights for business owners worldwide—privatization, budget cuts and labor ‘flexibility’—due to the engineered absence of government constraint on the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services brought about by global neo-liberal economic policies. Within the United States’s Wall Street democracy, the tyranny of the market that ruthlessly subjects labor to its regulatory and homogenizing forces of social and cultural reproduction, is laid bare. It comes as no surprise that the privatization of health care, drastic reduction of social services for the poor, and rumors of Social Security in connivance with Wall Street have coincided with the stagnation of wage growth and declining economic prosperity for most working-class men, women, and children. These recent trends are also associated with the shrinking middle-class in the United States.

L.C.A.M.: Given such a daunting scenario, does democracy seem perilously out of reach?

McLaren: Very much so. We witness the frontiers of human freedom being pushed back as ‘free’ market forces are being pushed forward by the ruling class. Astonishingly, even given this shocking state of expanding social and economic inequality in the United States, capitalism has never been so blindly infatuated with its own myth of success. Corporate leaders in the United States and

dominant media have inured us into accepting the capitalist marketplace as the only possible social reality. Contemporary pro-capitalist ideology "betrays a remarkable amnesia about capitalism itself. It forgets that its success is dependent upon the blood, sweat, and tears of the poor. It effectively naturalizes the exploitation of the world's poor and powerless, reducing workers to the market price of their labor-power. If U.S. capitalists could have their own way, they would market for sale the tears of the poor.

The buying and selling of human lives as commodities —the creation of what Marx called "wage slaves"— must be guaranteed as a constitutive factor of our democracy, so this condition is carefully disguised as a "voluntary contractual agreement," even though the only alternatives to shaking the sweaty palm of the market's invisible hand are starvation, disease, and death. Liberals and conservatives alike love to heap fulsome praise on the United States as the world's bastion of freedom, while ignoring the fact that its grandiloquent dream for saving the world has been a dismal failure. The backwardness of the economies of the so-called Third World *has become a necessary condition* for the flourishing of the economies of the so-called First World.

L.C.A.M.: Despite all the fanfare surrounding the promises of free trade, does it remain the case that both advanced and developed countries have been hurt by globalization?

McLaren: Only a few metropolitan centers and select social strata have benefited, and it is no secret who these select occupants are. The functional integration among production, trade, global financial markets, and transport and speed technologies that make financial transactions instantaneous, have facilitated the re-deployment of capital to "least-cost" locations that enable exploitation on the basis of advantages it will bring to those wishing to become part of the "Millionaires Club."

As global assembly lines increase, and as speculative and financial capital strikes across national borders in commando-like assaults ("move in, take the goods, and move out"), the state continues to experience difficulty in managing economic transactions, but has not yet detached itself from the infrastructure of corporate imperialism. Transnational corporations and private financial institutions —Gold Card members of the leading worldwide bourgeoisie— have formed what Robinson and Harris call a "transnational capitalist clan." And while the emergent global capitalist historic bloc is marked by contradictions in terms of how to achieve regulatory order in the current global economy, national capitals and nation states continue to reproduce themselves. Home markets have not disappeared from the scene since they continue to provide ballast for the imperialist state through ensuring the general conditions for international production and exchange.¹

The globalization of capital has dramatically occasioned what Mészáros (1999) describes as the “downward equalization of the differential rate of exploitation”, where workers all over the world—including those in advanced capitalist countries such as the United States—are facing a steady deterioration of working conditions, due to the structural crisis of the capitalist system, a crisis of monetarist capitalism and the aggressive marketization of social relations.

Capitalism is predicated on the overaccumulation of capital and the super-exploitation of rank-and-file wage laborers. The irreversible contradictions inherent within capitalist social and economic relations—those between capital and labor—are taking us further away from democratic accountability and steering us closer to what Rosa Luxemburg (1919) referred to as an age of “barbarism.”

L.C.A.M.: Do you consider that the nature of capitalism is hidden?

McLaren: It is hidden because it is everywhere. In another sense, capital’s cheerleaders have hidden its diabolical nature and refusal to be accountable to democratic interests behind the non-sequitur claim that the free market promotes democracy. In fact, self-determining governments only get in the way of the goal of transnational corporations, which is, as Canadian philosopher John McMurtry argues, to open all domestic markets, natural resources, built infrastructures, and labor pools of all societies of the world to foreign transnational control without the barrier of self-determining government and people in the way.

McMurtry asserts that free market democracy is a self-certifying term premised on the most odious of lies. Corporations steward us in the direction of market doctrine, a doctrine legitimized by its baptism in the fire of commodity production. He asks: Who are the producers? They are, after all, owners of private capital who purchase the labor of those that produce, including, notes McMurtry, that of white-collar managerial and technical workers. While some investing owners may also be producers --paying themselves as managers in addition to the remuneration they receive as owners-- most corporate ‘producers’ do not actually produce goods. These owners have no roles in the production process and are constituted as fictitious legal entities or ‘corporate persons.’ The real producers --the workers-- are reduced to faceless ‘factors of production’ employed by the owners of production. There is no freedom for the actual producers within the ‘free market economy.’ This is because the real producers belong to the employer, where they serve as the instruments of the employer’s will. What little freedom exists is located at the top levels of management, but even here freedom exists only so far as it conforms to the ruling command of maximizing profitability for stockholders and owners. Obedience to the market god has been perceived as the only path to freedom and fulfillment.

L.C.A.M. Can you be more specific on how would you evaluate the success of globalized capitalism?

McLaren: The economic performance of industrial countries under globalization in the 1980s and 1990s is much poorer than during the 1950s and 1960s, when they operated under a more regulated social-market economy. Economic growth as well as GDP growth has been lowered and productivity has been cut in half; in addition, unemployment has risen dramatically in the OECD countries.

Latin American countries that have liberalized their trading and external capital regimes have suffered from fall outs and from severe financial crises, including the “peso crisis” of 1994-95 in Mexico and the “Samba effect” of 1999 in Brazil. Latin American countries following the Washington consensus have, since the late 1980s, experienced a long-term growth rate reduction from 6 percent per annum to 3 percent per annum.

Globalization has been a dismal failure for the vast majority of the world’s capitalist nations. And yet the corporate elite refuse to concede defeat. In fact, they are boldly claiming victory and, furthermore, that history is on their side. In a sense they are correct. But we have to understand that they are claiming history for themselves. They have been victorious. In fact, they’ve made millions.

L.C.A.M.: At whose expense?

McLaren: On the other hand, as I have pointed out in my work with Ramin Farahmandpur, the growing bipolarization and the over-accumulation of capital by the new breed of opulent gangster capitalists from reigning global mafiocracies, has reduced the odds of surviving hunger, poverty, malnutrition, famine, and disease for a growing segment of working-class men, women, and children who are now joining the ranks of the urban ghettos and global slum dwellers in their *casas de carton* all over the world. We are not talking only about Calcutta and Rio de Janeiro, but our own urban communities from New York to Los Angeles.

Whether by increasing the extortion of absolute surplus-value through the proliferation of *maquiladoras* along the U.S.-Mexican *frontera*, or increasing relative surplus value extortion through increasing the productivity of labor and reducing the value of labor power, capitalism continues to hold living human labor hostage, fetishizing its own commodity logic and valorization process, and recasting the world into its own image. Value—the medium and the outcome of abstract labor— binds individuals to its law of motion. James Petras makes it clear that one quarter of the capitalist world cannot prosper when three quarters

are in deep crisis. The laws of capitalist accumulation cannot operate in such restricted circumstances.

L.C.A.M.: Do you think we have entered into a postindustrial economy?

McLaren: I am not persuaded that we have entered into a post-industrial economy where production can be moved easily from advanced capitalist countries in the North to developing countries in the South. As Kim Moody has noted, most production still occurs in the North and most foreign direct investment is still controlled by the North. In fact, 80 percent of this investment is invested in the North itself. While it is true that northern industries are being transplanted to the south to take advantage of the cheaper labor markets, the North merely modernizes its economic base while making it more technologically sophisticated.

L.C.A.M.: Many of us in Latin America have been criticizing the policies of neo-liberalism for decades. Now we see criticisms appearing from U.S. educators.

McLaren: That is true, and it is a good sign. Neoliberalism, “capitalism with the gloves off” or “socialism for the rich”, as I employ the term, refers to a corporate domination of society that supports state enforcement of the unregulated market, engages in the oppression of nonmarket forces and antimarket policies, guts free public services, eliminates social subsidies, offers limitless concessions to transnational corporations, enthrones a neomercantilist public policy agenda, establishes the market as the patron of educational reform, and permits private interests to control most of social life in the pursuit of profits for the few (i.e., through lowering taxes on the wealthy, scrapping environmental regulations, and dismantling public education and social welfare programs). It is undeniably one of the most dangerous politics that we face today.

L.C.A.M.: I have heard that some scholars in North America have compared Osama bin Laden to Che Guevara. Since you are a great admirer of Che, and have written about him, what is your reaction?

McLaren: Yes, I will provide you here with my response that I have made public in the United States. Any comparison of Osama Bin Laden to Che Guevara is grossly misleading. In fact, it is a dangerous comparison. One man, whose terrorist practices most Muslims worldwide find to be repugnant, wages a religious war (*jihad*) against Judaism and secularism under the cry of "*Nasr min Allah, wa fathun qarib*" ("Victory is from God, and conquest is near"); the other, an atheist, refused to persecute anyone on the basis of religious beliefs, as he fought against brutal dictatorships, economic and military imperialism and the oppression of the poor in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. One

struggles for the installation of a repressive authoritarian theocracy where women are subjugated, prevented from working and receiving an education, where minorities are extirpated as 'infidels', witness the Taliban's persecution of the Shiite minority in Afghanistan. The other struggled for a socialist and democratic society where women work alongside men in a relation of equality, where racism of all kinds is condemned and abolished, where illiteracy is virtually unknown and where each and every person has access to an education and adequate medical care. Che's guerrilleros did not throw acid in the faces of unveiled women or assassinate tourists with automatic weapons. Unlike members of Bin Laden's International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders, Che would never have purposely attacked innocent civilians. The beret-clad Che and Bin Laden in the white robe and *kaffiyeh* of a Saudi preacher have little more in common than facial hair. To compare Che and his foco in Bolivia or the Sierra Maestra to Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'eda is a fatuous move. The recent attacks in Washington and New York City were reactionary acts of mindless terrorism with no explicit anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist agenda. They had nothing to do with "class struggle" or the fight for human liberation and everything to do with human cruelty. So far nobody has presented demands or clarified the purpose of this horrendous act, and at best we can speculate that they were motivated by a hatred of U.S. secular society, the support of Israel by the US government, and for what Bin Laden sees as a violation of the Koran and the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), the continuing US military presence in Saudi Arabia that pollutes the land of the Al Aksa Mosque and the holy mosque. They were also fostered by the US invasion of Iraq and the continuing US sanctions. Bin Laden exhorts his followers to pursue a *hegira* (a religious journey) to places such as Afghanistan and enlist in a *jihad*. It is said that Bin Laden issued a fatwa in 1998 that called on Muslims to kill Americans wherever they are found.

A statement from the National Editorial Board of News and Letters, an international Marxist-humanist organization, cites: "The September 11 attacks have nothing to do with any struggle against capitalism, injustice, or U.S. imperialism. They were a brutal act of violence against U.S. workers that has no rational cause, legitimacy, or justification. They were simply geared to kill as many people as possible, without any regard for class, race, or background." Nothing could be further from what Che stood for, and died for.

It is true that in order to understand the actions of Bin Laden one cannot decouple them from the innocent Muslim victims of US military interventions, both over and covert. And I would argue that the broader issue is to link the climate of and context for terrorism to the global division of labor created by world capitalism. But I want to make clear that understanding this relationship is not the same as condoning acts of terrorism or providing a rationale for it.

L.C.A.M.: So, would you say there is a difference between Che's utilization of the guerrilla and the terrorism of Bin Laden?

McLaren: There is a profound difference between Che's utilization of guerrilla warfare tactics and Bin Laden's acts of terrorism such as the world witnessed in horror on September 11. In fact, President Bush recently described the current commando actions by the US military in Afghanistan as 'guerrilla warfare'. Even Bush appears to note the distinction, which is saying a lot. To compare guerrilla campaigns against federal troops in wars of liberation with Bin Laden's criminal and morally abhorrent terrorism against the innocent is facile and pernicious. It is clear that the US media will continue to make this connection in order to distort and damage the legacy of Che and that of anti-capitalist liberation struggles in general.

Che was certainly not a perfect human being, but his thoughts and actions have inspired everyone from Catholic priests to landless peasants. Next thing you know, some US academics will be comparing Osama Bin Laden to Subcomandante Marcos, who has used guerrilla tactics and is also an international icon, which would be an insult to the ongoing struggle of indigenous communities throughout the Americas.

One can only hope that the US ceases its military action that will only bring about yet more civilian casualties and direct more hatred against the US, and seeks instead diplomatic efforts to resolve the current crisis. It is clear that the US military actions in Afghanistan will only increase the cycle of violence and bring about more terrorist attacks in the US. I fear the US and Britain will only provoke more intense social upheaval around the world. First of all, think about the global alliance they are creating with despotic regimes in order to unleash the most sophisticated weapons of death on the poorest nation on the planet. Think of the pressure they are putting on protest groups and trade unions to abandon or de-emphasize their struggles, legitimate struggles for better working conditions. A more dangerous threat than acts of terror are the contradictions internal to the system of world capitalism. Throughout its history, capitalism has tried to survive in time of crisis by eliminating production and jobs, and forcing those in work to accept worse conditions of labor, and siezing opportunities that might arise in which the public would support military action in order to protect markets or create new ones.

L.C.A.M.: How do you regard President Bush's call to fight terrorism as a fight for freedom and democracy?

McLaren: As I have mentioned in some recent articles, this is a particularly difficult time to call for rethinking the role that the United States plays in the global division of labor. The recent events of mind-shattering apocalyptic

dimensions, the sudden unfolding nightmare that saw death and destruction unleashed upon thousands of innocent and unsuspecting victims in Washington and New York City such that the gates of hell appeared to have been blown open, have made it difficult for many United States citizens to comprehend why their familiar world has suddenly turned upside-down. Critical or revolutionary pedagogy takes a strong position against terrorism. Acts of terrorism are as backward and horrific as acts of capitalist-driven imperialism and in no circumstances can they be justified. It is clear to me that today world capitalism is trying to re-establish itself, since its current forms are unsustainable. In other words, it seizes opportunities to use military force to protect its markets and create new ones. However, it is important here that critics of U.S. capitalism -- and world capitalism, for that matter -- and I count myself as one of them, cannot simply list all the horrible acts of imperialism engaged in historically by the United States -- a long and bloody list, to be sure -- as evidence of or a rationale for why these terrorist acts occurred. To do so is irresponsible. The terrorist attacks occurred without reason, demand, or proclamation. These acts were not acts against U.S. capitalism, imperialism, or injustice, but were demonic crimes against working people and crimes against humanity as a whole. For instance, five hundred Mexican-Americans were killed in the attack on the World Trade Center, more victims than from any other nation outside of the United States. They worked at Windows on the World, in the office cafeterias, cleaning services, and delivery companies and little media attention has so far been paid to them. And while we can gain a deeper understanding of these events by recognizing how the United States is implicated in a long history of crimes against the oppressed throughout the world -- including interventions in post-cold war theaters -- this history in no way justifies the terrorist attacks. These attacks were, in the words of Peter Hudis, "the reverse mirror image of capitalism and imperialism" and not the opposite of capitalism and imperialism. I think this is a good description. Such attacks have been propelled by reactionary religious fundamentalist ideology -- what could more accurately be called Islamism -- that in no way represents all followers of Islam. As Edward Said remarks: "No cause, no God, no abstract idea can justify the mass slaughter of innocents, most particularly when only a small group of people are in charge of such actions and feel themselves to represent the cause without having a real mandate to do so." Terrorism is one of the most repulsive acts imaginable and the recent attacks of September 11 certainly qualifies as a crime against humanity. These attacks follow the terrorist killing of 239 US servicemen and 58 French paratroopers in Beirut in 1983; the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in which hundreds were killed; the 1996 car-bomb attack on a U.S. barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia that killed 19 Americans; the 1995 car-bomb attack on an American National Guard Training Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia that took 4 lives and, of course, the 1993 World Trade Center truck-bombing that killed 6 people and injured over a thousand others. And there was the more recent attack on the US Cole in Aden that killed 17 sailors. Terrorism is

always abhorrent and this time it was captured by the media in Washington and New York City in such a fashion that the images of New York City during and after the attack will permanently be fixed in the structural unconscious of US citizens. As a nation, we are still in shock. We are trying our best to recover, to heal. As Peter Hudis noted, even in the midst of this anti-human destruction the light of humanism did shine, in the hundreds of workers and citizens who flocked to "ground zero" in New York to help clear rubble, save victims, and provide medical aid to those who had been bloodied and battered in the attack. Construction workers rushed to save office workers, Black youth assisted elderly Jewish people to get out of the area -- events like these became commonplace. Hudis reports on new forms of solidarity that emerged that included prisoners at Folsom Prison, most of them Black, who collected \$1,000 to aid victims of the disaster. However, as Hudis further notes, these humanist expressions of solidarity, however, are being quickly silenced by Bush's effort to use the attacks as an excuse to militarize America, restrict civil liberties, and prepare for what the rulers have long aspired for -- permanent military intervention overseas. Hudis remarks that in just one single day the terrorists succeeded in totally shifting the ideological ground and handed the far Right one of its greatest victories.

I think critical educators across the country must oppose what we are now seeing throughout the United States -- a senseless xenophobic statism, militarism, erosion of civil liberties, and a quest for permanent military interventions overseas within the fracture zones of geo-political instability that have followed in the wake of the attacks, all of which can only have unsalutary consequences for world peace. This is particularly crucial, especially in light of the history of US imperialism, and in light of another of Said's trenchant observations -- that that "bombing senseless civilians with F-16s and helicopter gunships has the same structure and effect as more conventional nationalistic terror."

As critical educators we are faced with a new sense of urgency in our fight to create social justice on a global scale, establishing what Karl Marx called a "positive humanism." At a time when Marxist social theory seems destined for the political dustbin, it is needed more than ever to help us understand the forces and relations that now shape our national and international destinies.

I am committed to the belief that critical/revolutionary pedagogy can help to bring about a global society where events of September 11, 2001 are less likely to occur. Critical pedagogy is a politics of understanding, an act of knowing that attempts to situate everyday life in a larger geo-political context, with the goal of fostering regional collective self-responsibility, large scale ecumene, and international worker solidarity. It will require the courage to examine social and political contradictions, even, and perhaps especially, those that govern mainstream United States social policies and practices. It also requires a re-examination of some of the failures of the left, as well.

Given this daunting global scenario, it is important that educators ask the following: Is there a viable socialist alternative to capitalism? What would a

world without wage labor be like? Without living labor being subsumed by dead labor? Without the extraction of surplus value and the exploitation that accompanies it?

The practices of US-backed regimes in the Middle East such as Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia who are waging brutal campaigns of violence against their Islamic opposition -- certainly provide a backdrop against which we can begin to analyze the events of September 11. However, I think Bin Laden's recent comments that the attacks were a retaliation for the US sanctions on Iraq and for the US support of Israel in its attacks on Palestinians is to a great extent a form of political opportunism on Bin Laden's part. I'm not so sure that he really cares much about the Iraqi or Palestinian people.

I have a description by Edward Said of the attacks of September 11. In a recent interview with David Barsamian in The Progressive, Said wrote:

At bottom, it was an implacable desire to do harm to innocent people. It was aimed at symbols: the World Trade Center, the heart of American capitalism, and the Pentagon, the headquarters of the American military establishment. But it was not meant to be argued with. It wasn't part of any negotiation. No message was intended with it. It spoke for itself, which is unusual. It transcended the political and moved into the metaphysical. There was a kind of cosmic, demonic quality of mind at work here, which refused to have any interest in dialogue and political organization and persuasion. This was bloody-minded destruction for no other reason than to do it. Note that there was no claim for these attacks. There were no demands. There were no statements. It was a silent piece of terror. This was part of nothing. It was a leap into another realm--the realm of crazy abstractions and mythological generalities, involving people who have hijacked Islam for their own purposes. It's important not to fall into that trap and to try to respond with a metaphysical retaliation of some sort.

Unfortunately, George W. Bush has fallen into the trap of a metaphysical retaliation of apocalyptic proportions. Bush himself early on described the war on terrorism as a "holy war" but dropped that description at the urging of his advisors. And while the terrorist attacks were indeed from another realm, another planet, an understanding of the recent history of this planet -- particularly US relations in the Middle East -- could go a long way in understanding the attacks of September 11. US actions in the geopolitical arena of the Islamic world certainly can help provide an historical and explanatory framework for probing the events of September 11. Said notes that the root causes of terrorism can be traced to " a long dialectic of U.S. involvement in the >affairs of the Islamic world, the oil-producing world, the Arab >world, the

Middle East--those areas that are considered to be essential to U.S. interests and security. And in this relentlessly unfolding series of interactions, the U.S. has played a very distinctive role, which most Americans have been either shielded from or simply unaware of.”

I think the word “dialectic” is important here. I don’t think we should say that US actions were the direct cause of the attacks, because such a position is undialectical. For instance, the North Vietnamese, who suffered the tragic loss of millions of dead at the hands of the US, did not attack the US populace in retaliation. But it is surely the case that US involvement in the Islamic world created the backdrop against which terrorism can grow. I agree with my colleague, Doug Kellner, that the terrorist attacks can be understood by using Chalmers Johnson’s model of “blowback” (i.e., a term first used by the Central Intelligence Agency but adopted by some leftists to refer to actions that result from unintended consequences of US policies kept secret from the American public). More specifically, as Johnson notes, what the mainstream media reports as the malign acts of 'terrorists' or 'drug lords' or 'rogue states' or 'illegal arms merchants' often turn out to be “blowback” from earlier covert US operations". Blowback related to US foreign policy occurred when the U.S. became associated with support of terrorist groups or authoritarian regimes in Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East, and its clients turned on their sponsors. In Johnson's sense, September 11 is a classic example of blowback, in which U.S. policies generated unintended consequences that had catastrophic effects on U.S. citizens, New York, and the American and indeed global economy. As Kellner points out, the events of September 11 can be seen as a textbook example of “blowback” since bin Laden and the radical Islamic forces associated with the al Qaeda network were supported, funded, trained, and armed by several U.S. administrations and by the CIA. In Kellner’s astute reading, the CIA's catastrophic failure was not only to have not detected the danger of the event and taken action to prevent it, but to have actively contributed to producing those very groups who are implicated in the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11. The book, *Whiteout: the CIA, Drugs and the Press* by Cockburn and St. Clair reveals how the CIA assisted the opium lords who took over Afghanistan and helped to usher the Taliban into power, eventually helping in the financing of Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network.

More broadly speaking, I think we need to see the events of September 11 in the context of the crisis of world capitalism. It is capital that guarantees regimes of injustice, as Aijaz Ahmad argues. But capital does not emanate only from the World Trade Towers or the Pentagon. The problem, in the larger sense, is capitalism as a world system and the array of injustices that historically proceed from it. The larger problem is the global division of labor that is created. Of course, the United States is certainly a major, if not the major, player in this system. US policies -- driven by capitalist accumulation -- play a factor in the attacks but the attacks are not a direct outcome of US policies and practices. The US, along with other countries in the capitalist West, certainly help to create the

global culture that nourishes and helps to sustain the virus of terrorism -- such as the horror of a Bin Laden whom the CIA originally helped to fund when he was fighting the Soviets. In other words, US policies and covert operations as well as military interventions constitute some of the key environmental factors that produce a hatred for the United States. I have heard it said that the 1996 interview of Madeline Albright (when she was US ambassador to the United Nations) by US journalist Lesley Stahl was distributed throughout the Middle East. Stahl compared the number of children who have died as a result of US sanctions on Iraq -- half a million -- to the number of children who died in Hiroshima and Albright replied that "the price is worth it." Albright blamed Saddam Hussein for their deaths since he has built 48 presidential palaces since the Gulf War at a cost of 1.5 billion and has made the choice to let Iraqi children starve. This is of course partly true--Saddam Hussein is using the sanctions to keep certain sectors of his population starving and sick. But, as Steve Niva and others have pointed out, Saddam could not do so without the sanctions--the US has given him this tool to begin with. Secondly, the sanctions have been disastrous even without Saddam using them in certain ways so the US equally bears responsibility. Surely these sanctions should be part of the context when we discuss the causes of Islamism and terrorism. Other issues should be discussed too, but you won't see the mass media discussing them. You won't hear much about the former US support of the Taliban in return for pipeline agreements throughout the Caspian Sea region with companies like Unocal. You won't hear much about the Northern Alliance's history of extreme brutality, as documented by Human Rights Watch. You won't hear much about which industries the US government is willing to bailout financially, and the thousands of Americans who have lost their jobs because of the terrorist attacks, workers who are apparently expendable. You won't hear much about how the US helped created the Taliban movement with the assistance of Pakistan's intelligence agencies. You won't see replays of newscaster Dan Rather broadcasting about the 'freedom fighters' in Afghanistan -- those very same people we are now seeking out with cruise missiles.

I think Bush's characterization of the US as good and every country who does not support the US war in Afghanistan as evil, is wrong-headed. The US has to acknowledge how its own political and military actions -- bombing of civilians, sanctions that are responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths, covert and overt military operations and interventions over the years that have created great misery and destruction. There might be some who defend such actions as necessary in order to avoid even greater misery (although I generally don't buy this argument) but it is foolish to deny or to avoid the arguments of those throughout the world (arguments backed by empirical evidence) who are convinced that the United States is responsible for a great deal of oppression and exploitation throughout the world, usually in the so-called Third World. On the other hand, as I have mentioned earlier, I think it is misleading to explain the horror of September 11 mainly as a direct outcome of specific U.S. policies

overseas, as if it were a mechanical, one-to-one correspondence. US policies and practices are certainly a factor, however, and we do have to emphasize how the U.S. has helped create the terrain of suffering that gives rise to horrors like Bin Laden, either directly through CIA funding or indirectly through support for Israeli's policies against the Palestinians, U.S. bases in Saudi Arabia, etc. However, it is clear that other factors are involved, like anti-semitism, anti-Americanism --as against genuine anti-imperialism-- a reaction against the dimensions of "western society" that every leftist should support: workers rights, feminism, gay rights, etc. As Peter Hudis and others have noted, it is wrong to believe that Bin Laden was simply responding to the same injustices as radical leftists, except that he used a method leftists would never condone and would find utterly abhorrent. Steve Niva has pointed out, for instance, that Bin Laden's small, violent and socially reactionary network -- influenced by the socially reactionary Wahhabi school of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia and the conservative Pakistani Islamist Party, Jamaat-i Islami --is antagonistic to social justice and differs in important ways with the wider current of Islamic activism in Arab world and more globally. The wider current of Islamic activism does have a social justice agenda on behalf of the poor and dispossessed, is more involved in party building and mass mobilization, and largely rejects the simplistic Islamic doctrines promoted by Bin Laden's network. Moreover, Niva stresses that Bin Laden's organization is disconnected from wider Islamic activist movements in that they do not locate their struggle in a national context, but rather in a global war on behalf of Muslims worldwide. It is problematic therefore to locate the attacks on Sept 11 to a natural reflex reaction to US policies and practices. It is much more complicated than that.

L.C.A.M.: Is viewing the attacks of Sept 11 as mainly a reaction to US foreign policies and military interventions an irresponsible position to take?

McLaren: Again, one has to view US policies and interventions as part of the overall context for understanding these events because they contribute to the environmental backdrop against which these acts of terrorism occurred. However, the context in which Islamic fundamentalism or Islamism arises is a lot broader than simply a reaction against U.S. foreign policy, although as I mention once again, this is surely one among several other factors that creates a climate of hate against the United States. And the problem of understanding the attacks of September 11 is certainly greater than attributing it to Bin Laden's hatred of modernity. Again, we can't look at Bin Laden's puritanical Islamism and ignore the actions of the United States on the stage of world history. Our approach needs to be a dialectical one. According to Tariq Ali, after the Afghan Communist Party carried out a coup against the correct regime of Daoud, and established improved medical care and free education and schools for girls, there was factional fighting that led to the victory of Hafizullah Amin, a repressive organization. The Red Army was sent in by the Soviet Union to topple

Amin and to sustain the Afghan Communist Party. The US decided to destabilize the regime by arming the ultra-religious tribes and employing the Pakistan Army to co-ordinate the efforts of the religious extremists against the Soviet Union. When the Saudi regime suggested that Bin Laden could help in this effort, the US recruited and trained him and sent him to Afghanistan where in one strike he is reported to have attacked a co-educational school and killed the teachers. After the Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan, a coalition government was formed consisting of groups loyal to Iran, Tajikistan and Pakistan but a civil war broke out among these groups. Pakistan had been training a student militia (the Taliban, who were influenced by Wahhabism and believed in permanent jihad against infidels and other Muslims such as the Shias) in special seminary schools and these were sent into the civil war in Afghanistan. The Taliban eventually captured Kabul and most of the country and until about June, 2001, some US think tanks were even thinking about using the Taliban to destabilize the Central Asian Republics. The US had given millions of dollars to the Taliban before September 11. Shouldn't teachers in the US be encouraged to study this part of US history linked to the Cold War? Or will this history be 'off limits' in our high schools? But in describing the context of events leading up to Sept 11, I think it is also important to criticize the lack of success of the secular left. After all, part of the problem also has been the retreat -- and the defeat -- of the revolutionary left worldwide. A case can be made that the rise of Islamism, for instance, is related to the defeat of the secular left by US/Western imperialism. Aijaz Ahmad has pointed out that in Iran and other countries, the "defeat" of the socialist and anti-colonial nationalist movements enabled the Islamic fundamentalists to take over. It could be said, for instance, that Islamism arose to fill that space in Iran which had been left vacant with the elimination of secular anti-imperialist nationalism. Let's cite one example. In the 1970s there was a massive secular anti-imperialist movement in Iran--many of the 250,000 Iranian students in exile considered themselves as Marxist. In 1979 the "Marxist" (semi-Stalinist) Fedayeengroup had a large following. Peter Hudis notes, however, that part of the problem was with the left itself -- that, for instance, that Iranian left was dominated by a unilinear revolutionist political perspective which led it to support Khomeini on the grounds that he would lead the country to the necessary stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Islamic movements that might have been able to offer a more anti-colonialist alternative were defeated. There were contradictions within the Iranian left's revolutionary politics -- and also within Arab socialism in general -- that could not be overcome. Steve Niva points out that much of the lead up to the Iranian revolution was actually secular left but that the revolution was hijacked by the reactionary wing of the Islamic camp. The issue isn't only secular versus religious ideology. There was also a non-secular Islamic group that was also against imperialism that was caught between the secular left and the right-wing of Islamic revolutionism. Well, this is a discussion for another time. But there is another important point here to be made from the perspective of Marxist

Humanism. Peter Hudis notes, and I agree, that while we surely have to expose the actions of the U.S. military and its leaders in the government, for their role in shaping history towards violence against oppressed peoples, and while we need to oppose Bush's war drive, we also can't ignore how the internal contradictions in radical politics that was defined by "first negation" also contributed to this situation. Marxist humanists do not stop at the first negation, but rather move forward to negate the negation. They don't, in other words, just want to defeat capitalism, but raise the issue of what society will be like after the revolution. Here, revolutionary praxis is defined by absolute negativity as the seed-bed of liberation. As Marx once put it, "the correct formulation of the problem already indicates its solution."

Something that is very evident now in the US is that public discourse has been hijacked by the popular media. Will the culpability of our acts of imperialist aggression continue to be covered up by the mass media? The mainstream media has helped to whip up a climate of revenge across the country under a spectacle of patriotism. I think it was H. L. Mencken, playing on Samuel Johnson's famous description of patriotism (as the last refuge of a scoundrel) who referred to patriotism as the great nursery of scoundrels. So much about patriotism is nourished by the distortion of history and false claims about a nation's past. Many students across the country know little about the efforts of the United States to secure economic and military world hegemony, often through supporting dictatorships and autocratic regimes in the so-called Third World. It is easy to convince the U.S. public that the "new war" that we are waging is a fight between good and evil, when that same public is kept in the dark by the mainstream media with respect to the history --past and present-- of US foreign policy. Students in United States colleges and universities don't really comprehend why so many in developing countries dislike the United States. They are not, for the most part, aware of this history.

L.C.A.M.: Would you say it is a virtually hidden history?

McLaren: It is virtually a hidden history, yes. The facts are available, of course, but they are rarely discussed in the mainstream media. To unscroll these facts in public would be participate in a ritual that challenges the very sanctity of patriotism. It is difficult for students to comprehend, for example, why Third World peoples blame the US government for the deaths of half a million children and thousands of adult civilians as a result of US sanctions on Iraq. Or blamed for killing thousands of Sudanese and then blocking a UN investigation into the killing. Or blamed for the thousands who died in Nicaragua at the hands of Oliver North's murderous Contras. Or blamed for the suffering in Cuba due to a US-imposed embargo. Or blamed for an event that occurred on a different September 11, 28 years ago, when the Chilean Air Force, with support from the US (including Henry Kissinger) bombed its own Presidential Palace in downtown Santiago, causing the deaths, among others, socialist President

Salvador Allende. (I should note here that renowned Chilean author, Ariel Dorfman, wrote recently that the notion that we have lost our innocence and that the world will never be the same again that was uttered by the people of Chile in the context of Chilean terror that began on September 11 in 1973 is now being heard in the streets throughout the United States. Dorfman rejects the demonization of the US even though he has been the victim of US arrogance and intervention and he hopes that “the new Americans forged in pain and resurrection” will be “ready and open and willing to participate in the arduous process of repairing our shared, our damaged humanity”). Or blamed for bringing 4 million people to the brink of starvation in Afghanistan because of US sanctions; or blamed for supporting dictatorships in places like El Salvador and Guatemala that murdered hundreds of thousands of indigenous peoples with Apache helicopter gunships. Or blamed for killing thousands of civilians in Yugoslavia with cruise missiles, smart bombs, F-16s, and depleted uranium ordinances. According to Canadian philosopher, John McMurtry, over 90 percent of military-wrought deaths in the world have been on unarmed people since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

There are more examples. The US installed the Shah in Iran in 1953, who ran a regime of terror, including the torture of dissidents. The US helped to support the Indonesian invasion of 1975 where over 200,000 East Timorese were slaughtered and the US reportedly supplied General Suharto of Indonesia with assassination lists. The US continues to support the Colombian government where paramilitaries slaughter 3,000 citizens a year with US military aid. In fact, the Bush administration’s multibillion dollar aid to Colombia (the 3rd largest recipient of US military aid in the world) is supposed to help to suppress cocaine production, but that money --as the Bush administration well knows-- is used by right-wing paramilitary groups to target trade union leaders who are organizing in the coal mines. Coal is being encouraged for use in US power plants and coal mines in Colombia are owned by US multinational corporations based in places like Birmingham, Alabama. Not only have hundreds of mine workers been murdered, who were trying to organize unions, but hundreds of teacher-union leaders have been murdered as well. The US supports Turkey --which has killed tens of thousands of Kurds since 1984. According to the Health Education Trust in London, 200, 000 Iraqis died during and in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War. We are the world’s largest seller of weapons. For a time we were close allies with Saddam Hussein, Noriega, Bin Laden, Duvalier, and Marcos of the Phillipines. Look, in the past 20 years we’ve bombed Libya, Panama, Grenada, Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq, and Yugoslavia.

We seem fearful of raising questions today that were raised by activists decades ago -- activists who are today revered as heroes. For instance, how much different are we now as a country than when Martin Luther King described the United States on April 4, 1967, at the Riverside Church in New York, where he

said: "my government is the world's leading purveyor of violence?" We should be allowed to raise this question in our schools. There will surely be many different answers and arguments. But we should be allowed to debate this question with the best rational, analytical, and dialectical means at our disposal. That is one of the marks of a true democracy. Self-criticism is what deep democracy is about. A democracy that lives up to its name. We don't ask this question to assist the enemies of the United States. We ask this question because it is the type of question that must define us as a democracy since democracy is never fully achievable but always in the process of creating itself through analyzing both its weaknesses and its strengths. If we shut down this question -- and there are many US religious, political, and cultural leaders who say that we should -- then at some level we are capitulating to the terrorists. We then create the type of closed society that we accuse our detractors of supporting. Then we take a big step towards fascism. Let me share with you a profound contradiction. President Bush argues that we're fighting for democracy, pluralism, and civil liberties. In a recent speech before Congress he said that terrorists "hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government". He went on to say: "They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan." He ended his speech by saying: "This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom."

But how could this be true, since any coalition that includes Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Jordan can not include the principles stated by Bush in his speech. After all, each of these countries restricts freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, religion, and movement. Jordan is a monarchy whose security forces have engaged in "extrajudicial" killings. The establishment of political parties are prohibited in Saudi Arabia. In fact, they have a religious police force to enforce a very conservative form of Islam. Egyptian security forces regularly arrest and torture people under the banner of fighting terrorism. You know, it strikes me as a bit disingenuous that Bush now seeks global/international cooperation to fight terrorism, especially after abrogating the **ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile)** treaty and abandoning other multilateral treaty frameworks such as the Kyoto protocol and the Biological Weapons Convention, walking out of the UN conference against racism held in South Africa, and extending NATO into Eastern Europe. And in order to fight terrorism, the US is even willing to go to bed with Pakistan's General Musharraf, offering American Aid and shedding the sanctions that it had imposed after Pakistan's nuclear build-up. When the *mujahedin* were fighting the Soviets, the United States provided 3 billion dollars to bolster radical Islamic groups, and the CIA worked with Pakistani intelligence to help create the Taliban. Within the Bush administration there are those, like Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, who in 1992 wrote a Pentagon

memo arguing for a frontal US assault on Russia in order to liberate the Baltic states, who want to go to war not only with Afghanistan but also Iran and Iraq. And we continue to support Israel --which some have described as a vassal state of the global American empire that we have bankrolled during its 34-year illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and where Palestinians are treated much like indigenous peoples were treated in the United States by European settlers--even though it has a policy of state-sponsored terrorism, gives the Palestinians the choice between resistance or surrender, and is led by Ariel Sharon, whose invasion of Lebanon claimed the lives of 17,000 civilians. We continue to protect Israel from international sanction when they clearly have violated the rights of the Palestinian people.

And what about the US claim that it stands for freedom against evil? Human rights against anarchy? I am sure that the US wants to be always on the side of freedom and human rights. Or actually believes it is always on the side of freedom and human rights. But the historical record tells us a somewhat different story. The United States has indeed supported the political and civil rights aspect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights --to its credit-- but it conspicuously avoids that aspect of the Declaration that deals with economic rights and freedoms. This is troubling, but we can see the connection here in our discussion of globalization as a form of imperialism.

Well, there are many more issues to discuss. I am worried about the newly-established Office of Homeland Security and the possible consequences of new national security measures on civil liberties. I am referring here to wiretaps, secret searches of citizen's residences, the imprisonment or deportation of immigrants without supporting evidence, and I fear that checks against the FBI's domestic surveillance will disappear. I am also worried about academic freedom, about the freedom of scholars to do assess US foreign and domestic policy without fear of retribution or censorship. Edward Said puts it this way: "what terrifies me is that we're entering a phase where if you start to speak about this as something that can be understood historically--without any sympathy--you are going to be thought of as unpatriotic, and you are going to be forbidden. It's very dangerous. It is precisely incumbent on every citizen to quite understand the world we're living in and the history we are a part of and we are forming as a superpower." I couldn't agree more. And outside of the academy we have serious concerns as well. I worry that George W. Bush will now have more power to use political and economic repression to squash democratic protests by the working-class against an economic crisis that was beginning to lurch out of control long before September 11.

L.C.A.M.: What are the implications of all of this for educators?

McLaren:

It is to think about the pedagogical implications for understanding the role of imperialism and the globalization of capital on the world scene today. The question is not to argue that US military actions and US support for brutal dictatorships in the past -- and I could include Vietnam and Cambodia as well -- somehow provide a justification for terrorism. Only a monster like Bin Laden could make such a case for terrorism. There is no justification for terrorism. Absolutely none. The point I am making is a pedagogical one: Can we learn from capitalism's role in world history? Can we explore the relationship between capitalism and nationalism, between capitalism and nation-building? Can students in the US learn from the role of the United States in world history? Can we seek to a world where terrorism and oppression in all of its forms cease to exist? What would a world look like in which terrorism would not be a choice? Some would say that the US has a responsibility as an empire. Others, such as myself, would say that we have a responsibility to create a social universe without empires. For me, the whole question of why so many in the world hate the United States is an important pedagogical question. Of the 50 million students in US schools, how many will learn about the dirty wars conducted by the US?.

L.C.A.M.: Is blaming only the US a simplistic point of view?

McLaren: It is not only simplistic but wrong-headed. Here I need to sound a caution to my leftist companeros. It is not useful or correct --in fact it is repugnant-- to argue that we are now repaying in blood what we have done to other countries. Because this skips over the notion that some forces, like the terrorist factions of Osama Bin Laden, are as regressive as anything done in the service of US imperialism. There are a great array of crimes that can be linked to world capitalism, that go beyond the participation of the United States. I have listed above acts of US imperialism not in order to create an excuse or rationale for the terrorist acts, but to provide a context for discussing world history in light of the globalization of capitalism and contemporary geo-politics. On the other hand, we in the United States must share the burden of history. Our actions on the world scene are related to September 11. We are not morally or politically above the fray. To share the burden of history we need to become critically self-reflexive about our political system, its economic, domestic, and foreign policies in the context of the globalization of capitalism or what I have called the new imperialism. The problem is that students in the United States rarely are given the opportunity to discuss the above events because the media mostly avoids discussing them in-depth. And now it is possible in the present climate to be branded a traitor if you do discuss them. The point is that we need to be self-reflective as a citizenry -- we owe it not only to ourselves as US citizens, but as world citizens -- and provide spaces for critical dialogue about

these events. This is where critical pedagogy can be extremely important. The present generation has been sacrificed in advance to the globalization of capital. This poses a major dilemma for the future of the global. And pedagogically, it places a heavy challenge in the hands of teachers and cultural and political workers worldwide.

L.C.A.M.: Why try to help young people adapt to a system that is designed to exclude them?

McLaren: The idea here is not to adapt students to globalization, but make them critically maladaptive, so that they can become change agents in anti-capitalist struggles. In the face of such an intensification of global capitalist relations, rather than a shift in the nature of capital itself, we need to develop a critical pedagogy capable of engaging everyday life as lived in the midst of global capital's tendency towards empire, a pedagogy that we have called revolutionary critical pedagogy.

L.C.A.M.: How would you recommend that critical educators examine the concept of class?

McLaren: My answer to this question draws substantially on the work of a group of Marxist theorists and writers on Marxist educational theory, researchers and activists working in the UK: Paula Allman, Mike Cole, Ana Dinerstein, Dave Hill, Mike Neary and Glenn Rikowski. In particular, Paula Allman's groundbreaking book, *Critical Education Against Global Capitalism: Karl Marx and Revolutionary Critical Education*, encapsulates much of what I wish to say on the issue of class and education. It follows from the writings of these comrades that theorising class is fundamental in critical pedagogy. It is the heart and soul of critical pedagogy. It must be exercised as an aspect of the overall critique of political economy, and, in the process, provide a *critique* of class, as Bonefeld and others have argued. Class theory is a theory against class society, that is, an aspect of the exploration of the constitution of capitalism that is premised upon a project for its abolition. Let me emphasize. It is a theory *against* capitalist society, and not just a theory *of* it, as John Holloway and Glenn Rikowski have indicated. Class theory is therefore concerned with the *abolition* of class (Marx's position) and the opening up of human history from the desolation of its pre-history, as Ana Dinerstein, Paula Allman, and Mike Neary have emphasized. Some critical educators think that the so-called third world is the only location in which the "true" working class can still be found in any abundance. In taking this position, they fundamentally ignore the most essential component of Marx's class analysis: his dialectical concept, or conceptualization, of class as Paula Allman notes in her latest book. The concept of internal relations is crucial here as a way of understanding Marx's thought. Marx explains capitalism in terms of internal relations —the type of relations that are central to his dialectical

conceptualization of capitalism— because he found this type of relation in the real world of capitalism. Of course this was not the world of capitalism that we experience daily but the reality of capitalism that Marx was able to reveal through his penetrating analysis of the surface phenomenon—which constitutes our immediate and illusory experience— of capitalism. As Paula Allman and Glenn Rikowski have noted, when we apply a philosophy of internal relations to our subject of study, we focus on the relation and how it is responsible for the past and present existence of the related entities—the opposites in the relation—as well as the ongoing internal development within the related entities.

According to Marx's analysis of capitalism, the dialectical contradiction that lies at the heart of capitalism is the relation between labor and capital. This relation together with the internal relation between capitalist production and circulation/exchange constitutes the essence of capitalism, as Paula Allman has noted. The labor-capital relation, however, is our focus. It is the relation that also and, perhaps most significantly, produces the historically specific form of capitalist wealth—the value form of wealth. As Ramin Farahmandpur and I have argued, it is important to engage the issue of educational reform from the perspective of Marx's value theory of labor. Marx's value theory of labor does not attempt to reduce labor to an economic category alone but is illustrative of how labor as a value form constitutes our very social universe, one that has been underwritten by the logic of capital. Value is not some hollow formality, neutral precinct, or barren hinterland emptied of power and politics, but the very matter and anti-matter of Marx's social universe. It is important to keep in mind that the production of value is not the same as the production of wealth. The production of value is historically specific and emerges whenever labor assumes its dual character. This is most clearly explicated in Marx's discussion of the contradictory nature of the commodity form and the expansive capacity of the commodity known as labor-power. For Marx, the commodity is highly unstable, and non-identical. Its concrete particularity (use value) is subsumed by its existence as value-in-motion or by what we have come to know as 'capital' (value is always in motion because of the increase in capital's productivity that is required to maintain expansion). The issue here is not simply that workers are exploited for their surplus value but that all forms of human sociability are constituted by the logic of capitalist work. Labor, therefore, cannot be seen as the negation of capital or the antithesis of capital, but the human form through and against which capitalist work exists, as Glenn Rikowski has pointed out. Capitalist relations of production become hegemonic precisely when the process of the production of abstraction conquers the concrete processes of production, resulting in the expansion of the logic of capitalist work.

L.C.A.M.: When we look at the issue of educational reform, is it important to address the issue of teachers' work within a capitalist society as a form of alienated labor, that is, as the specific production of the value form of labor?

McLaren: Yes, absolutely. This becomes clearer when we begin to understand that one of the fundamental functions of schooling is to traffic in labor power, in the engineering and enhancement of the capacity to labor so that such labor power can be harnessed in the interests of capital. Glenn Rikowski's premise is provocative yet compelling and perhaps deceptively simple: education is involved in the direct production of the one commodity that generates the entire social universe of capital in all of its dynamic and multiform existence: labor-power. Within the social universe of capital, individuals sell their capacity to labor for a wage. Because we are included in this social universe on a differential and unequal basis, people can get paid above or below the value of their labor power. Because labor-power is implicated in human will or agency, and because it is impossible for capital to exist without it, education can be re-designed within a social justice agenda that will reclaim labor power for socialist alternatives to human capital formation.

L.C.A.M.: What can be done to defeat globalization as you have described it?

McLaren: Well I think Petras and Veltmeyer have done a good job of giving some direction for moving towards a socialist transition. They don't think it is a good idea to delink from world production, and I agree. We would be giving up too many necessary products for consumption and production. We can't go the way of market socialism, because this opens the door for plundering the state for private gain, and here the market will direct socialism and not the other way around. I agree with Petras and Veltmeyer that a good place to start would be to increase local capacity to advance the forces of production and democratize its relations. However, any external linkage must help create the conditions for increasing the internal capacity to deepen the domestic market and serve popular needs. Market relations must be subordinated to a democratic regime based on direct popular representation in territorial and in productive units. Direct producers must make basic decisions. Exchanges between regions, sectors and classes must be integrated. Petras and Veltmeyer advocate an assembly-style democracy to control the content and direction of market exchanges. The focus must be on the creation and reconstruction of essential links between domestic economic sectors, and the creation of socio-economic linkages between domestic needs, latent demands, and the reorganization of the productive system. There needs to be a focus as well on the ideological and cultural education of working people in values of co-operation, solidarity, and equality.

L.C.A.M.: Is this where critical pedagogy can play a powerful role?

McLaren: Yes, in creating a society where real equality exists on an everyday basis. Challenging the causes of racism, class oppression, and sexism and their association with the exploitation of labor demands, that critical teachers and

cultural workers re-examine capitalist schooling in the contextual specificity of global capitalist relations. Critical educators recognize that schools as social sites are linked to wider social and political struggles in society and that such struggles have a global reach. Here the development of a critical consciousness enables students to theorize and critically reflect upon their social experiences, and also to translate critical knowledge into political activism. A socialist pedagogy --or revolutionary critical pedagogy-- actively involves students in the construction of working-class social movements. Because we acknowledge that building cross-ethnic/racial alliances among the working-class has not been an easy task to undertake in recent years, critical educators encourage the practice of community activism and grassroots organization among students, teachers, and workers. They are committed to the idea that the task of overcoming existing social antagonisms can only be accomplished through class struggle, the road map out of the messy gridlock of historical amnesia.

I support a socialist pedagogy that follows Marx's life-long struggle of liberating labor from its commodity-form within relations of exchange, and working towards its valorization as a use-value for workers' self-development and self-realization. It strikes me that there is so much talent and brilliance among the educational left, but the vision is often too narrow, and frequently small-minded, and occasionally pernicious. If ever there was a time to take our role in the world of global politics seriously, it is now. The left has many new challenges to face today and many questions have been placed before us that need to be addressed with a new urgency. One can only hope that we treat these questions seriously. As Marx has said: "Frequently the only possible answer is a critique of the question and the only solution is to negate the question." I believe that the socialist revolution can be brought about by democratic struggle, by infusing formal democracy (focussing on political rights) and substantive democracy (focussing on economic/material rights). There can, in my view, be no substantive democracy without formal democracy. We need both. Today, when the stakes are so high, I hope that we can move beyond ad hominem and mean-spirited criticism of each other in order to embrace a new political imaginary dedicated to the struggle for human liberation. While it is true that Marx described human beings as ensembles of social relations, Marx's value system was based on an inherent or internal criterion and not on imposed, external criteria. In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx affirmed certain common attributes shared by all human beings and the existence of a common human nature in the sense that human beings are all social, economic, political, and moral beings. As Ferraro notes, Marx's humanism made possible Marx's science. We need to be joined by that which we all share, our common humanity. And we need to draw upon such a common humanity to deepen our scientific and philosophical understanding of the world -- not in order to interpret the world, but as Marx argued, in order to change it.

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ⁱ The globalization of capital has new features that some argue constitutes a new stage of capitalist formation. These include but are not limited to the following internally related developments: the rise in influence of financial capital; a glamorous new role for banks and treasury ministries; a massive increase in personal debt that serves as a catapult for increased consumption; a restructuring and downsizing of the labor force and a fluid relocation of industries to developing countries in order to secure lower labor costs; the weakening of independent organs of the working-class; the rapid flows of advertising, public relations and infotainment; the replacement of real goods as the main targets of investment with “financial instruments,” such as national currencies, insurance, debts, and commodity futures; an increase in outsourcing and contract labor following the replacement of full time jobs with temporary and part-time jobs; the privatization of public institutions and attacks on economic welfare and security reforms of the past century (Ollman, 2001). (We do need the complete reference of this book or article)